



U.S. HOSTS MORE THAN A MILLION INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR
International Student Enrollments Show Signs of Flattening
Study Abroad by U.S. Students Is On the Rise

New York, November 13, 2017 – According to the *2017 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* data released today by IIE and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the number of international students in the United States increased by three percent over the prior year, and the number of American students studying abroad increased by four percent from the prior year.

In 2016/17, for the second consecutive year, U.S. colleges and universities hosted more than one million international students, reaching a record high of 1.08 million. This also marks the eleventh consecutive year of continued expansion of the total number of international students in U.S. higher education.

While the overall number of international students studying in the United States has increased, the number of new international students – those enrolled at a U.S. institution for the first time in fall 2016, declined by nearly 10,000 students to about 291,000, a three percent decrease from the previous year. This is the first time that these numbers have declined in the six years since *Open Doors* has reported new enrollments.

The factors driving the slowing of growth include a mix of global and local economic conditions, and in some cases expanded higher education opportunities at home and declining populations. The scaling back of large Saudi and Brazil government scholarship programs were a significant factor, as the number of students from those two countries showed the biggest decreases at all levels, including non-degree study. Much of the increase reported for the past couple of years can be attributed to more students pursuing Optional Practical Training (OPT) related to their academic fields after their degree studies, and thus remaining longer in the U.S. higher education system. These flattening trends have a nearly two year history, as students reflected in the current *Open Doors* report were already on campus in September 2016 for the fall term, and most had applied in 2015 and made their decisions in spring 2016.

IIE conducted a separate online fall enrollment survey with ten education associations in October 2017 to provide an early look at what campuses are seeing *now* for the current academic year. The nearly 500 colleges and universities responding reported continued flattening in the overall number of enrolled students and an average decrease of 7 percent in the number of new enrolled students.

But these numbers were not evenly distributed: 45 percent of the campuses reported declines in new enrollments for fall 2017, while 31 percent reported *increases* in new enrollments and 24 percent reported no change from last year.

“International student exchange is an essential contributor to America’s economic competitiveness and national security. The U.S. higher education sector remains the global leader in welcoming students from around the world, and at the same time, we are committed to increasing opportunities to study abroad for Americans,” said Alyson L. Grunder, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Policy in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. “We need to develop the talent and skills necessary for 21st century careers. It is in our national interest to build and grow the international relationships and networks that are key to addressing the global challenges and opportunities we face going forward. State Department exchange programs such as the Fulbright and Gilman Scholarship programs and our global network of EducationUSA advising centers in more than 170 countries are key to achieving these goals.”

International students benefit U.S. communities, colleges and universities, in many ways, including economically. In 2016 international students brought \$39 billion to the United States economy, through their spending on tuition, room and board and living expenses, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Their roles on campus as teaching and research assistants support the faculty in many departments, especially in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and their diverse perspectives help enrich classroom learning for U.S. students.

“Countries and multinational employers around the world are competing to attract top talent. As more countries become active hosts of international students and implement national strategies to attract them, the competition for top global talent in higher education and the workforce will only intensify,” said IIE President and CEO Allan E. Goodman. “Students continue to be attracted to the high quality and diverse opportunities offered by U.S. colleges and universities. But it is critical for U.S. institutions to set strategic goals and be proactive in reaching out to students and families in a wide range of countries in the coming year, and for the United States to keep its academic doors open to students from all over the world.”

While this year’s *Open Doors* report shows strong growth in the number of international students studying in the United States in the past decade, with an increase of 85 percent since 2006/07 (when there were fewer than 600,000 international students in U.S. higher education), the new findings signal a slowing of growth, with a three percent increase compared to increases of 7 to 10 percent for the previous three years.

Top Places of Origin and Host States for International Students in the U.S.

The top places of origin for international students studying in the United States were China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, and Brazil. The top host states were California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. Each of these states saw increases in international students in 2016/17.

Academic Levels

Open Doors 2017 reports that modest increases in the numbers of international students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees were largely offset by a decrease of 14 percent in the numbers enrolled in non-degree programs, including short-term exchanges and intensive English language programs. The number of students staying on after graduation for 12 to 36 months of OPT rose by 19 percent to more than 175,000 students, indicating a strong desire by international students to gain valuable career skills and connections before returning home.

Americans Studying Abroad

The report shows that 325,339 American students received academic credit last year at the home campus for study abroad in 2015/2016, an increase of four percent from the previous year. Study abroad by American students has more than tripled in the past two decades; however, the rate of growth had slowed following the financial crisis in

2008. The population of U.S. students studying abroad continues to diversify, with greater inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities.

U.S. higher education is increasingly focused on preparing U.S. students to secure jobs after graduation in order to advance their careers, as well as preparing them to thrive in the multicultural global marketplace. Studies have shown that studying abroad helps students develop the skills needed to succeed in today's interconnected world.

Top destinations

The top host destinations for U.S. students studying abroad in 2015/16 were the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, and Germany. China dropped out of the top five host countries, as the number of U.S. students studying there decreased by 9 percent. Europe was the top host region, attracting more than 50 percent of Americans who studied abroad, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia. Strong growth was noted in Australia, Czech Republic, Cuba, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Top majors

Twenty-five percent of all students who studied abroad were majoring in STEM fields, a number which has been growing faster than the average, followed by Business, Social Sciences, Foreign Language and International Studies, and Fine and Applied Arts.

About Open Doors

Open Doors is published by the Institute of International Education (IIE), which has conducted an annual statistical survey on international students in the United States since its founding in 1919 and in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs since 1972.

Open Doors also reports on the number of international scholars at U.S. universities and international students enrolled in pre-academic Intensive English Programs. Further details on the Open Doors 2017 surveys and their findings is on the Open Doors website. The full 100+ page report will be available in January and can be ordered from IIE Books. For more data, infographics and resources visit www.iie.org/OpenDoors.

About the fall 2017 online survey

The survey was carried out in October 2017 by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in cooperation with American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), American Council on Education (ACE), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), College Board, Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), and NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

About IIE

The Institute of International Education works to build more peaceful and equitable societies by advancing scholarship, building economies and promoting access to opportunity. As a not-for-profit with 19 offices and affiliates worldwide, IIE collaborates with a range of corporate, government and foundation partners across the globe to design and manage scholarship, study abroad, workforce training and leadership development programs. Its Generation Study Abroad initiative aims to double the number of Americans studying abroad by 2020, while its

International Academic Partnerships Program and others help academic institutions establish global networks for the exchange of students, faculty and researchers. Visit www.iie.org.

About the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional and private sector exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. Approximately 50,000 participants annually embark on these exchange programs, including the flagship Fulbright Program and the International Visitor Leadership Program. ECA also sponsors the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships for U.S. undergraduates with financial need, the Critical Language Scholarship Program in support of [U.S. foreign language study abroad](#), and the [EducationUSA](#) network of over 400 advising centers worldwide, which provides information to students around the globe who wish to study in the United States. For more information on the Department of State's educational and cultural exchange activities, visit eca.state.gov.

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